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Council and European Parliament agree on updated Community fleet capacity rules

The member states' permanent representatives today endorsed the compromise reached between the Council and the European Parliament concerning an updated regulation on a **Community fleet capacity policy to promote inland waterway transport**.

New uses of Inland Waterway Funds

The new regulation **broadens the scope of the reserve funds called Inland Waterway Funds**, set up under [Council regulation 718/1999](#), by amending its Article 8. While the measures provided for in the existing regulation concern only social matters and the safety of the working environment, other types of support measure are now introduced to encourage innovation and environmental friendliness. In this respect, a proposal from the Council that the funds could be used for adapting engines to future stricter European emission standards was accepted by the Parliament.

The measures concerning vocational training or retraining schemes will cover all crew members leaving the sector, including owner-operators, and not only those who are qualified as workers. Owner-operators who work and live with their families on the vessels operate roughly 80% of the fleet.

Measures to encourage owner-operators to join trade associations were already possible under the old rules, but the new text also provides for measures to strengthen the organisations representing inland waterway transport at EU level. The sector currently suffers from fragmentation, and stronger Union-wide organisations can help to mitigate this.

P R E S S

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Member states may also encourage ways of leveraging the use of the reserve funds in conjunction with available financial instruments, including, where appropriate, under Horizon 2020 and the Connecting Europe Facility, and financing instruments from the European Investment Bank.

The creation and current size of Inland Waterway Funds

Council regulation 718/1999 established an EU fleet capacity policy for vessels used to transport goods on inland waterways in the member states. In order to address the issue of fleet overcapacity on the EU inland waterway market, it provided, among other things, for the setting up of reserve funds by member states with inland waterways linked to those of another member state and a total fleet tonnage of over 100 000 tonnes.

These Inland Waterway Funds consist of financial contributions from the inland waterway transport industry. The cumulative value of the various member states' funds currently amounts to around EUR 35 million. However, due to their restricted scope, these funds have never been used. The new regulation is expected to change this situation to the benefit of the sector, the people working in it, the environment and the entire economy.

Naiades II to boost inland waterway transport

The draft regulation is part of the Naiades II programme presented by the Commission in September 2013. Naiades II focuses on making long-term structural changes in the inland waterway transport sector to enable it to contribute fully to the Europe 2020 growth strategy.

Next steps

To come into effect, the text still needs to be formally approved by the Parliament, whose vote in plenary is expected to take place in April, and the Council, which is due to take its decision after the vote in Parliament.

The regulation will enter into force twenty days after its publication in the EU Official Journal.

See also:

- [Inland waterways: Naiades II](#)
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